

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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M129 Western Red-backed Vole *Clethrionomys californicus*
Family: Cricetidae Order: Rodentia Class: Mammalia

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The western red-backed vole is distributed in California from Marin Co. north to the Oregon border, and inland through Trinity Co., western Siskiyou Co., and northeastern Shasta Co. Also found from Plumas Co. north to southwestern Lassen Co. and southeastern Shasta Co. Locally common in riparian, red fir, subalpine conifer, Douglas-fir, lodgepole-pine, mixed conifer, Jeffrey-pine, montane hardwood-conifer, and redwood habitats with abundant ground cover and litter. Elevational range from sea level to 1900 m (6235 ft).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Principal diet is a variety of underground fungi and some lichens (Maser et al. 1978). Also feeds on green vegetation, especially in late winter, and seeds, twigs, and insects. Forages mainly on ground, but also climbs bushes and trees.

Cover: Requires abundant ground cover of litter, slash, and logs. Most of life is spent under the forest floor, close to subterranean food sources (Maser et al. 1981).

Reproduction: Lichen nests are constructed beneath logs, or other debris, on the forest floor.

Water: No data, but lives in moist areas. Probably drinks water.

Pattern: Prefers dense conifer or riparian-deciduous forest, with ground cover and rotting logs (Maser et al. 1981). Often found near logs and stumps.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Active year-round. Primarily nocturnal, but probably active at some times of day as well.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: None.

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: Mates from March into October. Gestation of 1 female was 18 days. The young are born from April-November, with a peak in July in Oregon. Litter size averages about 3 (range 2-6).

Niche: Predators include martens, weasels, skunks, and owls (Forsman and Maser 1970).

The food habits (eating underground fungi) of this species may make it economically important to timber interests.

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